

VZCZCXRO3598
PP RUEHDBU RUEHPW RUEHSL
DE RUEHBUL #0377/01 0311634
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 311634Z JAN 10
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5223
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 000377

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/29/2020

TAGS: [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: 2010 ELECTIONS: IEC AND ISAF PRELIMINARY PLANS

REF: KABUL 245

Classified By: Polcouns Annie Pforzheimer, reasons 1.4 b,d

¶1. (S/REL) Summary: In recent conversations, Independent Election Commission (IEC) officials speculated that they were behind on 2010 election preparations and expressed doubt that the IEC could operate without international assistance. Meanwhile, ISAF contacts confirmed that ISAF is beginning plans to support the election with security and "logistic support in extremis." End Summary.

IEC Plans

¶2. (S/REL) In a meeting on January 20, the head of one of the IEC's key technical units told us that there was no procurement plan as yet, although elections at that point were fixed for exactly four months later. He had a structure of field operations for the 2010 Parliamentary elections, but said the IEC lacks plans for any of the following portions of election administration: tally software design or other IT needs, logistics, training, public affairs, or finance/administration.

¶3. (S/REL) Our source reported that registration packets for candidates have been sent out to the provinces, using a privately contracted transportation company, and that this company and others could be used to deliver election materials to about 70 percent of the country. For the remaining 30 percent, he said, either ISAF would have to do it via air or "there will be no election there." He opined that ballots might make it to Provincial or District capitals but the police chiefs and government officials would simply stuff the boxes and send them back, without opening polling centers. He claimed that the ANSF alone would not be enough to secure the materials in this 30 percent of the country which he characterized as being Pashtun-majority areas. (Note: source is Pashtun. End note.)

¶4. (S/REL) The official confirmed that the planned two days of training for candidate registration agents had taken place and that the training was good but that the entire election administration system was "broken" so the training was irrelevant. He said that when he had raised this issue of the need to make improvements in electoral operations since 2009 with Daoud Najafi, currently Chief Electoral Officer of the IEC and head of the Secretariat, Najafi said the system works fine and that there was no need to worry. As of January 27 1300 candidates had registered at IEC Provincial offices nationwide.

¶5. (S/REL) In another meeting on January 27 with the same official, he said he had eliminated the fake polling centers in Nangarhar, Ghazni, Paktika, and Kandahar so that though he had not changed the number of legitimate polling centers in these provinces, it looked like an overall decrease. He said he would do the same in Nuristan but had to wait until closer to the election date as this might prevent protest demonstrations from being organized there. He said he had

increased the total polling centers a bit in Kabul Province but in all other cases, polling centers were the same as in ¶2009. He said that in reality there are around 6,800 polling centers but he is budgeting for 7,000 because he expects to be forced to increase the number by IEC leadership for "political" reasons.

¶6. (S/REL) When asked if the 6,000 poll workers suspected of fraud in the 2009 by the IEC leadership will be re-hired for the 2010 election, he said he was unsure. He planned to try and keep them from being pollworkers again but he was concerned IEC leadership would force him to re-hire the workers, again for "political reasons." He opined that if Najafi and Ludin, the IEC Chief Electoral Officer and Chair of the IEC respectively, are allowed to serve in the IEC in any capacity, the 2010 election will be worse than 2009 because they are both emboldened and better educated in how to commit fraud. We raised the issue of UNDP's plan not to hire any provincial election officials due to the security situation and their elevated threat level following the October 28 attacks on the UN guesthouse in Kabul. International election experts have expressed major concern about how this will negatively effect the control of electoral materials once they are shipped from Kabul to the provinces. Our source said that if there is at least one international representative present in each province and monitoring the chain of control for election materials it will be satisfactory but that without the international presence the likelihood of fraud increases dramatically.

¶7. (S/REL) The source urged the international community to check constantly during the election to be sure about the disposition of donated funds. He said it had been very effective when, following the announcement of the Minister of Finance that the GIROA could fund the elections from the treasury, donors had immediately gone to the Ministry and walled off donated funds for the earmarked programs forcing the GIROA to acknowledge that it had no funds available without donor permission.

Coming Shape of the Commission?

¶8. (S/REL) Our source and others have noted that Chairman Ludin's appointment to the Independent Election Commission (IEC) ended on January 23. After that date, his signature is not valid on any IEC documents. Our source noted that Chief Electoral Officer Daoud Najafi, in Palace favor since his defense of Karzai during the 2009 Presidential elections endgame, wants to be named Chairman of the Commission itself. At the same time, General Ayub Assil, current Deputy Chair of the Commission, is also trying for the Chair but he is in a less powerful position, forced to use political party connections to lobby rather than any direct connection to the President.

¶9. (C/REL) According to Canadian officials, in a meeting with the Deputy Chief Electoral Officer of the IEC Secretariat, Zekria Barakzai, on January 14, Barakzai reportedly said he believed Chairman Ludin and possibly himself would be removed from office. However, at a January 23 meeting with President Karzai which Chairman Ludin attended (reftel), no mention was made of the fact that Ludin's appointment to the IEC was officially at an end. Later the same day, PolCounselor was told by Barakzai that Ludin may be re-appointed for another three years. First Deputy Speaker of the Lower House of the Parliament, Mirwais Yasini, told the Embassy on January 26 that he spoke to Barakzai and advised him to tell Chairman Ludin to step down quietly rather than allow himself to become the center of controversy.

ISAF Plans

¶10. (C/REL) ISAF continues to plan to provide security support for the elections, in partnership with ANSF, as well as "logistic support in extremis" despite the election date

change. There will be more activity related to troop build up through the summer, relative to the fall, when the build up will taper off. When asked if security and logistic support to the elections would hamper ISAF's troop build up or the new counterinsurgency strategy, ISAF election support planners opined that while it is always best to have all resources directed toward one objective, they did not foresee resources needed for the force uplift being re-directed to the elections to the extent that troop inflow would be adversely affected, particularly not for logistical support to the elections.

Ricciardone